A lush green rain garden with various plants and a sign in front of a brick building. The garden is filled with tall grasses, broad-leafed plants, and flowering stalks. A sign on the left side of the garden reads "RAINSCAPES For healthy watersheds visit RainScapes.org". The background shows a brick building with large windows.

RAINSCAPES Congregations

A guide for faith-based communities
to create living landscapes

Conservation Landscape at Warner Memorial Presbyterian Church, Kensington



Become stewards of one of our most precious natural resources—our water.

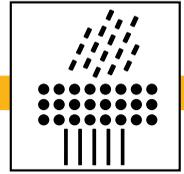
Together, we can do good work!



Rain Gardens



Conservation Landscapes



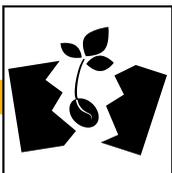
Permeable Pavers

Our streams and waterways need our help. One of the biggest challenges facing our waterways is increased **stormwater runoff**. Stormwater runoff is produced when rain falls on hard surfaces (like our roofs, parking lots and courtyards.) Instead of soaking into the earth, it flows above-ground, collecting pollutants such as animal waste, trash, fertilizers, road salt, motor oil and grease. Then it flows down storm drains directly into our streams. Stormwater runoff erodes stream banks, destroys aquatic wildlife, and carries pollutants downstream to our rivers, and ultimately to the Chesapeake Bay. **Did you know that stormwater runoff is the Bay's fastest growing source of pollution?**

RainScapes projects help control the damaging effects of stormwater runoff by capturing it on your property and reducing the volume entering storm drains. When you build a RainScape, you transform your property into a green sponge—creating a living landscape that absorbs the rainfall and supports native plants and wildlife.

We can improve our waters, but it will take all of us working together—faith-based organizations, neighborhood groups, educational institutions, state and local governments, businesses, and residential property owners.

Join us! Together, we can do good work!



Pavement Removal



Water Harvesting



Green Roofs

WHY BUILD A RAINSCAPE?

There are more than 500 congregations in Montgomery County. On average, each one generates 1.7 million gallons of stormwater runoff per year.* Many congregations are located near our most impaired waterways, and the majority have no stormwater management on site. **Montgomery County's faith-based organizations produce roughly 850 million gallons of stormwater pollution each year.** (That's enough to fill 1,300 Olympic swimming pools!) If every congregation takes responsibility for reducing its stormwater runoff, the impact will be significant.

As faith-based community leaders and members, you have the potential to be instruments of change. **You can inspire members of your congregation and teach the children how a hands-on project can be an expression of your community's religious and social values.**

There are also practical reasons to build a RainScape. For example, a RainScapes project can help you **resolve drainage issues, reduce your tax bill, or add curb appeal to your property.** (See *Transfiguration Episcopal Church* on pages 6.)

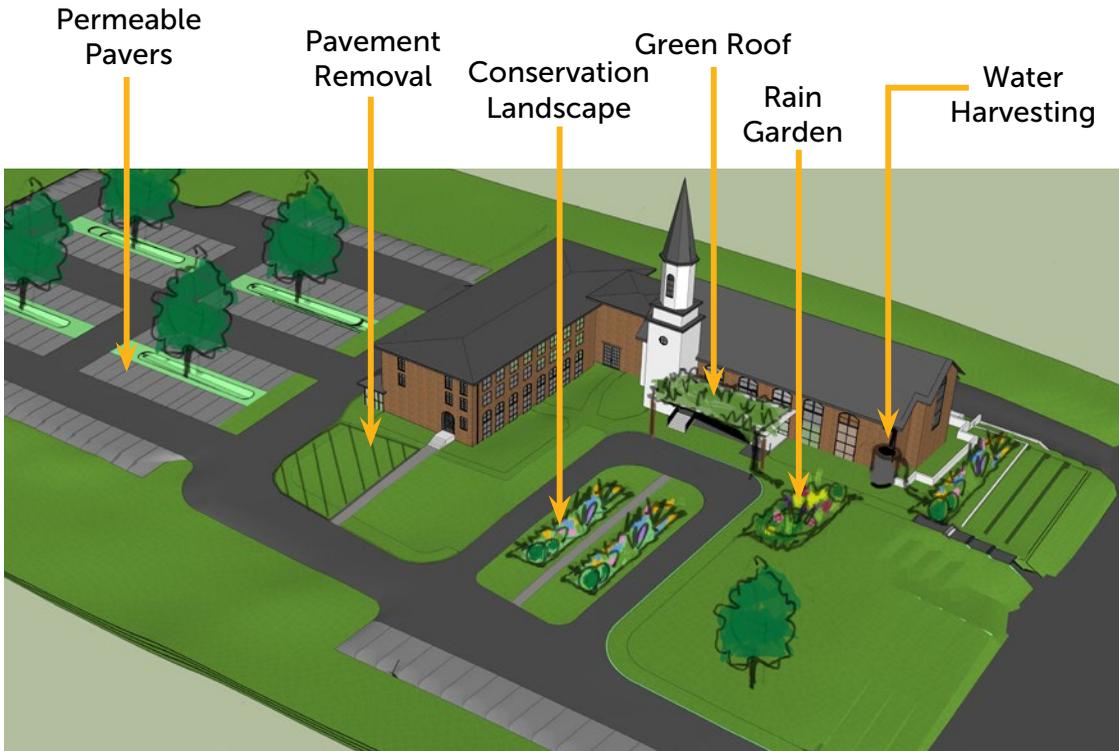
In addition, RainScapes projects can help build community and serve as a congregational point of pride. (See *Colesville United Methodist* on page 7.) At Beth Sholom, the synagogue's project did many things at once. It transformed a problem area into a beautiful space for fellowship and contemplation while building a connection with the larger, neighborhood community. (See page 8.)

**Estimated using data from Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection*



As faith-based community leaders and members, you have the power to lead through example!

St. James' Episcopal Church rain garden helps solve winter flooding problems in the parking lot.



This sketch shows potential locations for various types of RainScapes projects.

Join the RAINSCAPES CONGREGATIONS challenge!

Be a part of the movement to improve our local environment. Our goal is to have **25% of all Montgomery County congregations install at least one RainScapes project by 2025.**

Together, we can create more

- healthy waterways
- spaces for pollinators
- reasons to get **outside** and be **together**
- places to **connect with nature**

25%
by
2025
RAINSCAPES
congregations

SMALL SCALE PROJECT: Transfiguration Episcopal Church

RainScapes Rewards Rebate Project

Type: Rain garden

Size: 400 sq. ft.

Budget: \$4,200

Challenge: In 1990, an addition to the church increased the building's footprint by 25%. Because no plans were required to manage the increased stormwater, six downspouts emptied onto a grassy area. This area quickly became a swamp every time it rained. After a parishioner broke an ankle getting to her car, the church knew it was time to do something significant.

Solution: A member of the church's Boy Scout troop wanted to build a rain garden for his Eagle Scout Service Project. He had learned about rain gardens at Poolesville High School and then attended a RainScapes workshop. The church vestry saw that this Scout had the necessary knowledge and drive to undertake the project. This "do-it-yourself" community venture involved roughly 40 volunteers (adults and kids) and took five weekends to complete. *The RainScapes Rewards rebate program reimburses projects based on receipts and the size of the project.* In this case, the entire cost of the project was covered.

Results: The "swamp" problem was resolved, and the congregation now enjoys a colorful garden instead. Volunteers weed the garden once a month, and upkeep is included in scheduled church clean-ups, providing a hands-on expression of the congregation's environmental values.



Before



After

MEDIUM SCALE PROJECT: Colesville United Methodist Church

Demonstration Project

Type: Rain garden & conservation landscape

Size: 180 sq. ft. rain garden

200 sq. ft. conservation landscape

Budget: \$8,000

Challenge: After successfully completing a conservation landscape RainScapes Rewards Rebate project, the congregation wanted to do more to reduce the volume of stormwater runoff being sent to their local stream.

Solution: The Montgomery County RainScapes program worked with the congregation to design a demonstration conservation landscape, a rain garden, and a community-based workshop. The parishioners held a Planting Day to install the plants. Runoff from one quarter of their 4,500 sq. ft. roof was diverted to the rain garden. Now, every time it rains an inch, 700 gallons of water gets filtered and absorbed by the rain garden rather than going down the storm drains to local streams.

Results: These projects are a “faith in action” point of pride for the community. They reduce runoff to the nearby stream while attracting pollinators to the property. Families of the preschool walk by the project daily and learn about watershed health and what they can do at home.



Colesville United Methodist's rain garden



Colesville's minister and congregants at Planting Day

LARGE SCALE PROJECT: Beth Sholom Synagogue

Grant Project

Type: Rain garden & conservation landscape

Size: 5,442 sq. ft.

Budget: \$90,000 (funded in part by a Montgomery County Chesapeake Bay Trust grant)

Challenge: Congregants used neighboring Saint James Episcopal Church's property to walk to the synagogue. Every time it rained, the path became an unsafe and unsightly drainage channel. Flowing stormwater caused erosion problems on the Saint James preschool grounds.

Solution: One synagogue member was a landscape designer who had worked with

Saint James and RainScapes on previous projects that targeted drainage issues. She helped Beth Shalom and Saint James apply for a grant to create a path that could accommodate foot traffic and handle the flow of stormwater. Project installation was performed by a professional landscaping company.

Results: Beth Shalom congregants can now walk safely to religious services along a dry footpath. The problem area has become an attractive multi-functional space for pedestrian travel, outdoor classes, and relaxation/contemplation. It is designed to hold rainwater for short periods, allowing runoff to soak into the ground naturally. By partnering up, the two congregations addressed drainage problems, created a beautiful path connecting the institutions to the surrounding community, and improved water quality.



A walking path & outdoor meeting space are incorporated into Beth Shalom's conservation landscape,

READY TO START?

Types of RainScapes include **rain gardens, conservation landscapes, permeable pavement, pavement removal, water harvesting, and green roofs**. Below are the 8 steps for implementing a RainScapes project on congregational grounds.

The Process:

STEP 1: Evaluate your priorities.

Identify what your members care about— Environmental stewardship? Beautifying the community? Leading by example? How can a RainScapes project advance these shared goals?

Next, evaluate your congregation’s physical site. Are there any on-site problems that a RainScapes project could help solve?

Last, consider how your congregants feel about the property’s outdoor spaces. Are they willing to help with the ongoing weeding and maintenance that rain gardens and conservation landscapes need, or do you have a maintenance contract that could include project care?

STEP 2: Contact RainScapes staff for help. Our experts will walk your congregational grounds with you to determine which projects work best in your space. **We are here to help, so email us at RainScapes@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov or give us a call at 240-777-7702**

STEP 3: Build support for a project. Determine whose support you need within your organization. Clergy? Board of Directors? A particular committee? An executive director? Meet with them. Help them understand how RainScapes projects affirm your congregation’s priorities and values. Listen to their concerns, and address them honestly. Share information about the financial and technical support offered by the Montgomery County RainScapes Program. If you have volunteers that can do most of the work, be sure to mention this. Keep your congregation’s leaders informed every step of the way, and be generous in sharing the credit for your project’s success!



Rain gardens and conservation landscapes add beauty to your property while reducing stormwater runoff. They also support pollinators and native birds.

Silver Spring United Methodist

□ **STEP 4: Start planning.** Go to RainScapes.org for videos, photos, print-outs, and more. Carefully choose the best location for your project. Remember— RainScapes staff can offer guidance if you need it!

□ **STEP 5: Organize volunteers.** Energize your community to join you. Even a small group can have a big impact when everyone works together. Encourage others to join at every step of the process. *We are happy to give a RainScapes presentation to your congregation— Just ask us!*

□ **STEP 6: Design your project.** Work with your committee and congregation to develop a design for your project. If you need technical assistance, ask RainScapes. Sometimes, starting with a small but very visible project can help build momentum for a bigger one. Remember— after completion, all projects must be maintained with congregational support.

□ **STEP 7: Find funds and install your project.** There is financial help available.

- **RainScapes Rewards Rebates:** Up to \$20,000 per parcel
- **Chesapeake Bay Trust:**

Large projects: Montgomery County Watershed Restoration and Outreach Grant

Small projects: Community Engagement Mini Grants

After your project is installed, your congregation can apply to have its **Water Quality Protection Charge reduced**. Depending on how much impervious area is controlled, you may qualify for up to an 80% reduction. Learn more at MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/water/WQPC/nonprofits.html.

□ **STEP 8: Tell your story and celebrate your achievements.** Celebrate each step of the way, and after the project is complete, put up your RainScapes sign. Continue to communicate your accomplishments both internally and externally, seasonally and annually. Incorporate the project into scheduled church clean-ups. Share your story and celebrate the benefits. You can educate and inspire other congregations in your community and your denomination!



Children at Berman Hebrew Academy learn about permeable pavers

Resources For Building a RainScape

RainScapes Congregations: (Go to RainScapes.org and click on "RainScapes Communities")

RainScapes Rewards rebate amounts:

(MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/water/resources/files/RainScapes/Rebate-Table.pdf)

"Sacred Waters: RainScapes and Congregations in Action":

(search this title on YouTube, or ask RainScapes for a complimentary DVD)

National Wildlife Federation's Sacred Grounds Program: (NWF.org/SacredGrounds)



Other Environmental Programs for Congregations

Montgomery County Programs:

Montgomery County Green Business Certification (MCGreenBiz.org)

Tree Planting program (TreeMontgomery.org)

My Green Montgomery - a local guide to green living (MyGreenMontgomery.org)

"Let There Be Light" LED Bulb Exchange (Energy@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov)

Organic Lawn Care Guidance (MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/lawns)

Storm Drain Art Projects (MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/water/volunteer/#art)

Pet Waste Stations (Ana.Arriaza@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov)

Independent Non-Profits

Interfaith Power and Light (ipldmv.org)

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (InterfaithChesapeake.org)

Trash Free Potomac (FergusonFoundation.org)



25%
by
2025
RAINSCAPES
congregations

JOIN THE CHALLENGE!

Goal: 25% of Montgomery County's congregations have RainScapes projects by 2025

Step 1

Evaluate your priorities.

Step 2

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Step 3

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Step 4

Start planning.

Step 5

Organize volunteers.

Step 6

Design your project.

Step 7

Find funds and install your project.

Step 8

Tell your story & celebrate achievements!



Visit [RainScapes.org](https://www.rainscapes.org) today and click on *RainScapes Communities!*